

Letters

NO BABY BOOM OR SEX RATIO CHANGES FOLLOWING *FIFTY SHADES OF GREY* IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Editor,

Fifty Shades of Grey (FSOG) was a 7/2011 erotic romance that traces the deepening and complex relationship between a college graduate and a young business magnate, with soft porn elements that include bondage/discipline, dominance/submission, and sadism/masochism. The media hyped this, claiming FSOG “sparked a “mommy porn” revolution”.¹ The second and third volumes of FSOG were published in 4/2012. A film adaptation of the first book was released on 13 February 2015.

FSOG was touted as inciting increased coital activity, thereby potentially resulting in a baby boom. “It’s one of the hottest and best-selling book series of all time. It has made millions of readers swoon”.¹ August authorities were cited as confirming this effect. Robin Milhausen, an Associate Professor of Family Relations and Human Sexuality at the University of Guelph, was quoted: “the material is arousing...

Many women respond to the book and don’t even know it. It’s leading to more sex”.²

The male to female ratio at birth (male divided by total births: M/T) approximates 0.515 (slight males excess). Numerous factors may affect M/T.³ Increased coital activity may not only increase the birth rate but also increases M/T as sex ratio at conception follows a U-shaped regression curve on cycle day of insemination. Thus, increased coital activity will increase the likelihood of conception early in the cycle, increasing male conceptions.⁴

This study sought spikes in total births or M/T in England and Wales circa nine months following FSOG books.

METHODS

Monthly male and female births for England and Wales were obtained from the Office for National Statistics for 1/99–8/99 (Ms. Athena Ray – personal communication). The null hypothesis was that FSOG releases in 7/2011 and 4/2012 did not influence total births and M/T circa nine months later, i.e. 4/2012 and 1/2013.

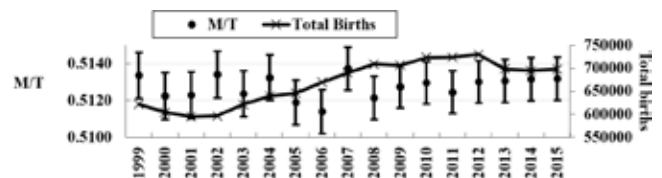


Fig 1. Annual births and M/T for England and Wales, 1999-2015

RESULTS

This study analysed 11831728 live births (M/T 0.5128, 95% CI 0.5125-0.5130). Annual births and M/T shown no discernible spikes (figure 1). A monthly breakdown for 1/2010-8/2016 shows no discernible spikes in total births or M/T at/around 4/2012 and 1/2013 (figure 2).

DISCUSSION

Linda Murray, Global Editor-in-Chief of BabyCenter.com stated that “reading ‘50 Shades of Grey’ is acting like an aphrodisiac for women...It’s putting them in the mood more frequently and they’re having more sex and they’re ultimately getting pregnant faster”.¹ And the Daily Mail averred that “the meteoric rise of *Fifty Shades of Grey* is set to spark a new wave of births, according to pregnancy and parenting websites”.⁵ FSOG was therefore anticipated to result in a “revolution ... coming to the delivery room, where a baby boom sparked by the “*Fifty Shades of Grey*” phenomenon is predicted”.¹

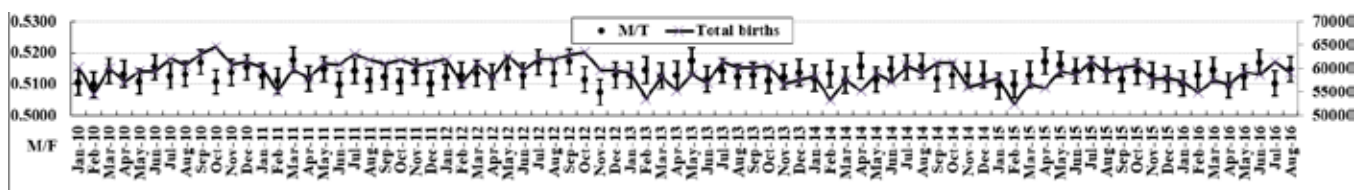


Fig 2. Monthly births and M/T for England and Wales, January 2010-August 2016

This paper thus highlights the importance of measurement of cause and effect since expected effects may not always ensue from events. It also highlights the importance of the availability of M/T data by month since analyses as carried out in this study are impossible without data at this level of detail.

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